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2016

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Recommended Citation

Ebbesson, Esbjörn and Bergquist, Magnus, "Dancing in the Dark-Social Media Tactics in the News Industry" (2016). *MCIS 2016 Proceedings*. 20.

<http://aisel.aisnet.org/mcis2016/20>

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DANCING IN THE DARK - SOCIAL MEDIA TACTICS IN THE NEWS INDUSTRY

Completed Research

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Abstract

The news media ecosystem has expanded over the years leading up to today's society to include advertisers, newspapers and other media houses, content producers, along with new players like social media platforms to together form a value packed mix of services for end-users to embrace. The shift from being a dominant platform owner concerning the printed paper, often with its own distribution network, presents the newspaper with many challenges when transforming into, or entering other platform owners' ecosystems. While previous research has mainly focused on the newspaper industry's development of strategies for embracing social media into their ecosystem, this study investigates newspaper workers' social media usage for the purpose of attracting attention and generating value. The study of newspaper workers' practices shows that, moving into digital platforms controlled by other dominant actors in the ecosystem, workers enact a tactical approach. Two tactics are identified: adaption and exploitation. The paper contributes with empirical insights into how newspaper workers develop practices to embrace social media that goes beyond previous research on social media strategy. We also apply the theory of everyday tactics developed by Michel de Certeau as a scaffold to theorize newspaper positioning in the rapidly changing news media landscape.

Keywords: Digital platforms, news media ecosystem, tactics, newspaper, social media.

1 Introduction

During the last two decades, the newspaper industry has been an area where digitalization and social media has made a profound impact in changing the relationship between media houses, advertisers and end-users. Many newspapers were early adopters of the Internet as an additional distribution platform and started building proprietary digital publishing platforms in the 1990's. However, for many newspapers the printed product remains an important revenue stream. Actors in the newspaper industry are therefore struggling with how to balance the faith in the printed paper as a continued source of revenue while moving towards multiplatform strategies involving a gradually increasing digital media ecosystem (Doyle, 2013). Digital platforms are driving parts of this change as they enable newspapers to work with end-users in novel ways to both produce and distribute news (Krumsvik, 2013).

Social media is central to the transformation of the newspaper industry. Social media has introduced new actors and new channels for distribution and relationship building. In the new context, the newspaper, which was previously built around a printed product as the main channel for distributing news and relaying advertisements to users, tries to find new ways to innovate through developing and maintaining digital services of their own (online edition and other services). In the continuous pursuit of the reader, newspapers explore every aspect of the news media ecosystem surrounding social media platforms. In this endeavour, the newspaper often finds itself becoming a content provider that acts on a platform controlled by someone else. To maintain a relationship with their user base, whom which they exclusively interacted with on their own platform previously, newspapers now increasingly find themselves enmeshing in other platform owners' ecosystems (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) (Ebbesson, 2015; Krumsvik, 2013).

From the social media platform owner's perspective, the newspaper is just one of many actors that the owner governs through rules and regulations. Platform owners are free to balance the ecosystems' value production in relation to their own profits, while attempting to maintain a healthy ecosystem. To a large degree, this contributes to the platform owners' strategies when offering features and restricting or promoting specific use scenarios (Boudreau, 2008). Digital platforms, such as social media, therefore present opportunities for newspapers, such as increased reach (Ebbesson, 2015) and ability to build relationships with readers, as well as challenges, as they need to manoeuvre both their own platform strategy and the strategies of other actors in the multisided ecosystem.

The challenge of managing social media platforms has been highlighted in contemporary Information Systems (IS) research, as an important research venue to investigate further (Aral et al., 2013; Kane et al., 2012). Exploration of how firms interact with public social media services, how public social media services and in-house services are combined and how firms should interact with specific social media features are examples of research topics that have been suggested as directions to guide both theory and practice (Aral et al., 2013). These calls for research are in line with (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015) who highlights the need for investigating how actors adapt their internal processes to create value for customers and how these processes interact with their digital infrastructures. Whereas literature on digital platforms, two-sided and multi-sided platforms often focus on the platform owner, who enjoys the benefit of creating strategies for their platforms (Boudreau, 2008; Eisenmann et al., 2006), we shift the focus to the weaker part of this relationship, the actor that enters a strong platform owners ecosystem. We do this by investigating the practice enacted by professionals in the news industry who work closely with the challenges presented by the emergent ecosystem of multiple digital media platforms for which newspapers must develop multiple and diverse strategies. By investigating the practice, we seek to understand how technology in the shape of social media platforms materializes themselves in practice, in line with similar practice based research (Orlikowski & Scott, 2015).

When investigating how newspapers approach challenges that emerge as they start acting on social media platforms owned by other actors, and thus tapping into new media ecosystems, we are concerning ourselves with strategizing as an emergent practice. Strategizing, or strategy-as-practice, is a familiar view on strategy in the IS context that contrasts the traditional “grand vision” of strategy and focus on individuals practices when it comes to enacting strategy in everyday work (Marabelli & Galliers, 2016). To study this phenomenon we adapt the lens conceptualized by Michel de Certeau (1984), a lens that identifies work practices where practitioners are put into situations where they have to respond to others strategies in the shape of rules or regulations. De Certeau (1984) labels this as a relationship between strategy and tactics and describes it as the different approaches a producer and a user will take when trying to control or use what de Certeau calls “the place”. The producer (e.g. owner) of “the place” will approach it differently than the user because of their different relationships to its resources and rules. When viewing, for example, a social media platform as “the place”, this lens can aid us in understanding why different practices enacted by professionals emerge, as they struggle with strategizing around their own publishing platform, or attempt to tactically use an external actor’s platform (i.e. Facebook or Twitter).

The paper at hand will explore how newspapers develop practices in order to manage the multitude of available digital platform resources in the digital ecosystem to leverage value, given that the newspaper is the stronger part in relation to their own platform, and the weaker part in the relationship with external platform owners. We pose the following research question: *What emergent practices can be identified in newspaper workers’ social media platform use?* The paper answers this question by introducing related literature pertaining to digital platforms and the newspaper context, followed by a theoretical framework dedicated to strategy and tactics as conceptualized by de Certeau (1984). The framework is followed by a description of our research approach and an empirical account describing the identified practices of newspaper professionals working with social media platforms on a daily basis. The results are then discussed from the view of strategy and tactics in the use of digital platforms leading up to a conclusion.

2 Related Literature

Visiting and interacting on social media platforms has become an everyday activity for many Internet users worldwide. The digitization of media and growth of social media platforms has led to both anticipated and unanticipated changes. These changes range from how we keep ourselves up to date and interact with other people, to changes in the relationship between producers and consumers by introducing inexpensive ways to create and publish different types of media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Shirky, 2008).

Digital platforms and their surrounding ecosystems are an important part of creating value for consumers and other actors in the current digital media ecosystem. In the digital media ecosystem actors such as advertisers, content producers and social media platforms create the foundation for value co-creation along with the end-users of the services. Using the newspaper industry as an example, social media platforms have become an important platform for distribution and relationship building with their readers (Ebbesson, 2015; Krumsvik, 2013). Social media platforms can be described as multi-sided platforms, that is, a platform that serves multiple actors or stakeholders (Boudreau, 2008). The role of the platform owner (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) in these multi-sided platform ecosystems is to nurture a healthy digital ecosystem and then reap the rewards by governing the ecosystem through rules and regulations (Boudreau, 2008). Digital platform have a unique set of complex characteristics that needs to be managed or balanced for actors that wish to either develop their own or utilize already existing platforms. Some of these challenges relate to their intangibility, that they can have radical effects on social structures, and that they are dynamic and generative (Tilson et al., 2013).

Acting in another digital platform owner's ecosystem presents both challenges and opportunities for leveraging value (Aral et al., 2013; Krumsvik, 2013; Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). The digitally enabled generativity in digital platforms presents the opportunity to build novel services often unanticipated by the platform owner, however, the generativity also leads to uncertainty since it is impossible to anticipate all possible changes initiated by the platform owner and other actors (Yoo, 2013). The unique characteristics of digital platforms therefore makes it key to learn more about how practices change in organizations to leverage value for customers (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015) and how, for example, features in social media platforms can be designed or used (Aral et al., 2013). Studying social media and its effects on practice can provide valuable clues towards learning more about how organizations influence and are influenced by digital services as they materialize in practice, a recent example by Orlikowski and Scott (2015) illustrates how social media use in the hospitality sector shifts power to the end-users by allowing them to comment and grade accommodations. Furthermore, the study illustrates how social media services unfolds in practice in an ongoing enactment through activities, people and artifacts, which highlights the value of viewing the phenomena through practice.

To understand or study how practices are changing in the newspaper industry, it is important to first highlight the underlying drivers of the newspaper as an organization, as these drivers influence the strategies and tactics that newspaper workers follow or employ. In order to do this, we will conceptualize and describe the newspaper as a two-sided market. Two-sided markets have been defined by (Rysman, 2009) as consisting of two sets of agents that interact through an intermediary or platform, where the decisions of each set of agents affect the outcomes of the other set of agents through an externality. The newspaper as a printed product or digital service is an established example of a two-sided market (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2006). The two markets in the case of the newspaper are readers and advertisers, therefore the ability to attract readers becomes key in order to sell advertisement space. Other common examples of two-sided market platforms include payment cards and social media platforms. One of the core incentives for companies to operate on a two-sided market is the possibility to achieve the effect of network externalities on both sides. When one set of actors grows in size it can lead to benefits for the other group (Eisenmann et al., 2006; Rysman, 2009). This dynamic can be illustrated by how the growth of game developers connected to a videogame platform makes the platform more interesting for consumers and vice versa. These dynamics are however slightly different in the media industry, as more advertisers connected to a media platform doesn't necessarily mean that it makes the platform more interesting for consumers. On the contrary, extant research (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2006) shows that advertisement can have a negative influence on the users' experience of the media service, and that different media contexts have a different influence on how resilient the consumers are to advertisements. Magazine and newspaper readers, for example, have a higher tolerance towards advertisements compared to the same users' interaction with video and web content. As extant literature shows, there are several challenges associated with manoeuvring social media platforms in industries where media converge and other platforms compete for the consumer base as it tends to threaten the core business models.

Several initiatives have been taken to meet the challenges and develop digital platform strategies for newspapers. Krumsvik (2013) outlines four strategic types of user participation that have been used within the media industry to deal with the introduction of social media. Referred to as the "four D's", these user participation strategies are deliberation, donation, data gathering and distribution. *Deliberation* refers to the newspaper as a place for democratic debate, *donation* refers to initiatives to let the reader contribute to the journalistic product commonly through photos or text, *data gathering* refers to the harvesting of user data for the purpose of for example targeted advertising, finally the *distribution* strategy refers to social media platforms as a cost effective solution for the distribution of content. Alongside these strategies, newspapers face the challenge of changing audience behaviour, where other actors, both organizations and private persons compete with media organizations for the users' attention (Friedrichsen & Mühl-Benninghaus, 2013). A core challenge is how the newspaper as a plat-

form owner (the analogue and digital newspaper), used to having control over the relationship with the reader, will be able to create strategies to succeed on other platform owners' ecosystem where they no longer govern the rules of interaction. Instead they must play the part as one of many complementors while still having the need to develop the multiple markets associated with an increasing diversity in revenue streams. From a strategy perspective, the newspapers must be in control and develop a coherent strategy, while simultaneously not be in control because of the need to improvise in a more situated manner to reap possibilities as they occur along the way by applying a tactical approach. In the following section we develop a theoretical frame of reference based on Michel de Certeau's theory on strategy and tactics and their relation to actors' control over place. We then elaborate this theory to also include place in the form of digital platforms.

3 Theoretical Framework

Strategy in practice, or the act of strategizing, contrasts the view of strategy as a grand vision by investigating how practitioners struggle with enacting a strategy in everyday practice (Marabelli & Galliers, 2016). The act of bricolage, which refers to the practice of using resources at hand to solve issues has been one way of understanding strategizing in the context of IS strategy (Ciborra, 2002). In this article, we draw upon a similar vein of theory, namely the difference of strategies and tactics as resources in everyday life as conceptualized by the French philosopher Michel de Certeau (de Certeau, 1984). What makes the perspective on strategy and tactics in everyday life an interesting framework in the context of digital platforms is that it clearly demarcates between strategy and tactics as two different approaches to practice that belongs to two different roles (the producer and the user) in relation to a given set of resources ("the place"). The producer is the actor that creates strategy in an attempt to control, and the user tries to bend the rules of the producers to gain benefits. Viewing strategy and tactics from this perspective adds a control or power dynamic to strategizing that aids in understanding the emergence of everyday practice of practitioners struggling with leveraging value from complex digital ecosystems.

According to de Certeau (1984) the use of strategy and tactics can be related to actors' positioning versus the place. The place can be anything that is created for use. Examples in previous literature include cities (from the perspective of city planners as producer/strategists and pedestrians as users/tacticians) and books (the author as producer/strategist and the reader as a user/tactician). In de Certeau's practice theory strategies are deployed as a way to produce and impose places whereas tactics use, manipulate and divert the spaces created through the strategies. For example, a foreigner in a new land brings with him or her traditions and ways of life from a native land, that when faced with the rules and regulations of the new land can create a space of plurality and creativity where the space is re-appropriated (de Certeau, 1984). De Certeau refers to this phenomenon as use, or rather re-use, that is an interpretation of the rules imposed upon him or her that creates a room for possibilities in terms of creating ways of operation that results in unexpected results based on the situation.

However, re-appropriation is always done in relation to rules and regulations attached to the place by the producer. The relationship between strategy and tactics therefore also involves relationships between actors. Strategy belongs to the "producer" of the place who is in control of setting up the rules and regulations defining the place. De Certeau (1984) describes strategy as "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as the subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated" (1984, p. 36). The definition also highlights the role of the "place" as a base from which relations with exteriority, that is customers, competitors, etc., can be managed. The place, as constructed by the producer, should be understood as the environment where the producer enjoys perks such as the ability to create the rules, which govern the use of the place. In the context of digital platforms, "the place" is materialized as the digital platform, where the owner of the digital platform enjoys the benefit of being able to strategize.

In the media industry, newspapers own publishing platforms constitute “the place” where they control content and communications. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, are also channels where newspapers establish activities, however, it is Facebook or another platform owner that through strategies determine which practices that can be established by the newspaper. Tactics is the practice of “the other” that is dependent on the producer, and thus systems, defined outside the other’s control. The other, in the digital media system, is any actor that benefits from using another actor’s ecosystem, for example a newspaper that uses a social media platform created by someone else to distribute news, or to interact with readers. The tactics used by the other is always dependent on time (the other needs to seize opportunities as they present themselves) and heterogeneous elements (by recombining resources in novel ways).

The place plays a central role in the relation between the producer and the other. The place is the territory where the producer and the other meet. The place thereby becomes the place of action, where the other becomes a user. The user in turn creates the practice of use based on what the place offers. In some contexts, the practice might very well be in line with what the place dictates, however, the place can also become a context for friction if what the place dictates does not align with the user’s goals. Suchman (1985) describes how actions appear smooth, transparent and almost invisible to us, when we use equipment that is “ready-to-hand”. But when breakdowns appear, when we are in unfamiliar contexts and deal with “unready-to-hand”, the rules and procedures that come into play are contingent and situated action becomes a resource to cope with the present situation. Situated action is linked to the place and the present, and is dictated by resources defined by the producer of the place, but it is also interpreted and manipulated by an improvising user. For the users of the place, the tactics therefore revolve around practices such as adapting, appropriating and reaping timed, short-term benefits (de Certeau, 1984).

4 Research Approach

To investigate the everyday practices of newspaper workers in the context of social media platform use we build on several empirical studies and examine a cross-selection of newspapers with both printed and digital newspaper editions. Our approach is based on the notion that knowledge is co-constructed by social actors through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meaning, documents, tools and other artefacts (Klein & Myers, 1999). In order to investigate the phenomenon of social media platform use in the organizations we carried out a series of interviews covering six different newspapers. We decided to cast a wider net, encompassing respondents’ views on newspapers both on a local and regional level, rather than focusing on just one specific case. The six newspaper houses, from now on referred to as Alpha to Zeta all have a printed edition, a web based edition and as well as an active presence on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The 14 interviews (440 minutes of recorded audio material) were conducted over the phone in 2014 with roles ranging from directors of social media editors to web editors and business developers. The audio material was transcribed to allow a thematic analysis.

Newspaper	Coverage	Roles
Alpha	Regional	Digital Development Group (2), Web Editor
Beta	Regional	Online News Editor
Gamma	Regional	Business Developer, Web Editor, Developer, News Editor
Delta	Regional	Business Developer, Web Editor, Developer
Epsilon	Nationwide	Social Media Editor, Edition Manager Web TV
Zeta	Nationwide	Online Edition Manager

Table 1. Newspaper coverage and roles interviewed at each newspaper.

The coding strategy followed what Saldaña (2009) describes as the process of coding, categorizing, re-coding and re-categorizing with the aim to generate themes that describe the strategies and tactics enmeshed in the practice surrounding newspapers in the context of social media platform use. To enable a flexible and iterative coding style that reflects the non-linear nature of the coding process the researchers also utilized memos. Jotting, and memos is a common and useful technique that can be used during categorization and re-categorization towards themes (Miles et al., 2014). The data was analysed in two larger cycles. During the initial cycle, the data was divided into meaningful chunks that could be used in the second cycle, which consisted of a pattern analysis where existing codes were rearranged and re-coded to provide a foundation for re-categorization towards a group of themes that captured the practice of newspaper workers in the context of social media. The codebook used during analysis consisted of both a prior codes based on literature (e.g. tactical relation to the place) and codes that emerged during analysis (i.e. responsiveness, adaption, exploitation). After the initial coding process we went to the literature to find explanations for the themes, helping us to reinterpret and reassess the themes in an iterative fashion. The final themes are therefore both grounded in the empirical material as well as assessed and evaluated based on relevant literature. Each of the two researcher conducted individual coding cycles, the results were then discussed in-between the two researchers.

5 Empirical Findings

The following chapter summarizes the empirical findings. The findings are divided into, practices towards the newspapers' own publication platforms (i.e. web and mobile), empirical findings regarding how newspapers in practice adapt to social media services where the platform is governed by another party (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and findings regarding how strategies and tactics are combined in concert to provide value.

5.1 The newspapers publishing platform

The newspapers' main goal when embracing digital platforms is to develop a strategy for online presence while keeping the established two-sided business model intact: good content should drive readers to the newspapers' digital platform and expose them to advertisement. The business model from the paper based newspaper is basically untouched. The strategy mainly deals with delimitations between free and paid content and how to drive readers to the paper edition of the newspaper. A challenge for newspapers is the competition from free online news that is openly available.

A major issue for newspapers is how to develop the digital platform as a space for availability versus viewing the platform as a controlled area only allowing paid access. This debate reflects the logic of the paper based news edition: only paying customers get access to the content. This ongoing debate on whether or not to use paywalls has recently shifted in favour of not using them. A newspaper representative working with digital development referred to the in-house discussion about different strategies: *"We have made an extensive investigation of how we should relate to paywalls, and our management arrived at the conclusion that we should not have paywalls, the simple reason being that it doesn't pay off"*. Furthermore, she added, *"To be frank, the reason behind having a paywall is to show the readers that what you pay for is something that we don't simply give away, but it's more of a psychological action, there is no money in that action"*. The revenue streams instead come from subscriptions, advertisement and in some cases sponsored content that is produced directly for the newspaper.

An important goal with having and controlling a digital platform is the possibility to gather data regarding users/readers. Knowledge about users' behaviour is crucial to create appealing content. A web editor described the ongoing work on one newspaper towards narrowing down their target group: *"We have learned more about what types of readers we have today, what makes them tick, and how they consume the content that we produce, like how many readers prefer the printed paper or the web, and so forth, based on that we formulated target groups"*. Platforms used on mobile devices are described

as strong platforms, since they help the newspaper reach the readers in a relevant context, where they can get news out in a timely fashion: *“on mobile, it’s not really much about the design, it’s about what kind of content you publish there, and what you are the fastest to publish [...] it is also where we attract a lot of new readers, being fast on publishing locals news, that’s the best way to attract new readers”*.

Online and paper, and how the newspaper is organized in order to support these different publication platforms has changed over the years, going from online being a part of the regular news desk, to being separated, to in some cases being merged again. Regardless of organization, today most newspapers have an “online first” or “digital first” approach towards their publishing strategy. The delimitation between the digital and the analogue is more focused on what type of content goes to which platform, rather than if one platform trumps the other, as expressed by an online editor: *“We don’t have a separation between online and paper, the news desk is shared, and the majority of what we produce is online first, we have some deeper analytic journalistic content that we run in paper. But it is really online first as we call it, that is the norm”*. To summarize, newspaper workers apply a strategic thinking to how they use internal resources. The analogue and digital platforms controlled by newspapers are generally viewed as two complementary channels used to reach the user, promote content, expose users to advertisement, and to gather information about use patterns. Although there is some internal competition and tension between the old and the new practices, newspaper workers view both channels as resources available for them in their daily work.

5.2 Adaption towards social media platforms

Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become external tools for the newspapers to reach readers. These digital platforms offer a fast paced dialogue with the readers, compared to what many newspaper workers are used to. However, utilizing social media platforms requires more than just technical integration, it puts strain on the entire practice of newspaper workers who require new routines, new ways to organize work and a different mind-set towards the relationship with the reader. A news editor described their initial approach towards Facebook: *“I don’t remember exactly when we started with Facebook, but when we did we said this. We will be on Facebook, but not until we feel that we actually can manage to do it. The worst that was, and still is, is those that say ‘we’re open between 9 and 5, and during those hours you can reach us on social media’. It doesn’t work like that, we want a continuous dialogue, a dialogue with the readers throughout the day, and I think we have managed to do that”*. Furthermore, he added that adapting to social media platforms as a part of the newspaper practice required a change in mind-set: *“It is going to be required that the reporters understand the interaction with the readers. Because the classic reporters stance has been ‘We write and you can be allowed to comment’ – A few years ago we didn’t even want their comments. [...] It is not like that anymore, it’s a continuous dialogue, we shape the news together, we’re in this together, and then you need to address them [the readers] differently, and it is required that you understand social media, and you will need to learn new tools, regardless if they are called X or Y”*. Not only does the reorganization challenge newspaper work practices – social media must be open 24/7 – in the social media context the newspaper workers describe that the relationship to the reader changed when new platforms for relationship building were introduced.

Social media platforms present newspapers with a new channel for interaction with their readers. However, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter also generate challenges for the newspaper workers. The dialogue that readers have in-between themselves, and with other actors, become quite different because of the more personal relationship with the reader than the newspaper has traditionally had: *“We’ve had interesting discussions. Are you really supposed to wish the readers a good morning and good night on Facebook? And we concluded. Yes, you should. It’s a different context. It’s a different dialogue, it’s not the authoritative press bringing you a message, it’s a dialogue, an interaction.”* The

new context introduced by social media interaction and communication patterns therefore presents the newspaper with a scenario where they encounter a different tone of voice compared to what they are used to in their reader dialogue. The newspaper workers adapt their practices to the communicative situation on the particular social media platform.

5.3 Exploitation of social media platforms

Although the communication practices with readers on a social media platform are different in comparison with what newspaper workers are used to, using user-generated content – such as comments – to develop the newspaper’s content and format is not new. Newspapers have collected different forms of information about reader preferences through letters to the press, reader panels and other forms of input that were transferred over to newspapers development of their digital platforms. However, social media offers newspaper workers new tools for interacting with their readers even when it comes to commenting. Newspapers can alternate between cultivating interaction with readers on their own platform, or to exploit options offered by maintaining a dialogue on several social media platforms. In some cases, the tone of voice on the social media platforms is favoured over what e.g. journalists are used to when interacting with readers on their own platform. A news editor working with reader dialogue at a regional newspaper expressed the difference between the platforms: *“I’ll put it like this, on social medias, like Facebook, the tone is a lot friendlier, it’s very rare that we get heated attacks there. We have received a lot heated attacks in our comment threads [hosted at the newspaper] but very rarely at Facebook”*.

The friendlier tone on Facebook, where readers also have to pose under their real name, opens up a way for newspapers to shift their users towards a cleaner and more friendly dialogue, newspapers move the dialogue to Facebook to avoid the worst “trolls”, that is highly opinionated and critical users of their online services. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, being open platforms, where the newspaper lacks as much control as on their own platforms also creates problems, where tactics such as monitoring needs to be employed to maintain a grasp of what the users do, a social media editor described how the high jacking of old comment threads generated the need for new monitoring software: *“there are different types of systems to monitor comments in social medias, and we’re investigating if there are any that we can use to get a better grasp of that. Sometimes there is a discussion thread for something that was published months ago, that all of a sudden gets spotlight because someone thought it was funny to go in and highjack it”*.

Social media platforms are important channels for distribution of content, with one of the primary drivers being to push traffic back to the newspaper. Although both Twitter and Facebook are common social media platforms to use for distribution of content, Facebook is favoured because of its installed base of users: *“We work primarily with Facebook since it is such a large part of the social market in Sweden right now, and it is also the place where we can drive the most traffic back to the site from.”*. The social media platforms act as an efficient way to get content out to the readers in the surrounding digital ecosystem. A potential benefit is the possibility that a link to a news article can attract a lot of attention and generate a considerable amount of traffic, as expressed by a business developer at a local newspaper: *“There are examples where 50-60% of the traffic to the article has been generated by Facebook [...] if you manage to create a news article that takes off like a rocket, it can save a whole week at the editorial department. That is, simply put, you reach the weekly goals, because of that rocket”*. The importance of viral or boosted traffic has generated the need for knowing how to use information available on others platforms in order to learn more about what is currently popular to be able to act timely and provide content that will drive reader traffic to the newspaper. An example of this is the use of reader preferences to create and present content that the readers find highly interesting through lists of “most liked” or “most popular content”. A developer at a regional newspaper explained how they use data from social media platforms to present readers with attractive content: *“We*

have some features on the site that are built around how many shares and how much attention something has received, that is, how viral the article is so to speak [...] We then estimate by scoring the article, and dividing it over time to get a list based on content of how viral something is based on how many people have read it. Simply put, the most-read list has gotten a lot smarter and now take external factors into account as well". Ongoing exploitation of information available on external platforms is in this way a tactic to strengthen the potential for the own publishing platform to deliver accurate predictions of what readers like to see more of.

5.4 Responsiveness towards social media platforms

A downside of using social media platforms for distributing content and gathering data about readers is that it is sensitive to platform changes that affect the newspaper's ability to exploit social media for their own purposes. An editor responsible for social media at a national newspaper expressed this concern by sharing a story about a recent event at the newspaper: "*All of a sudden there's a surprise, and the algorithms work in a completely different way than they did last week, and then you need to adapt to this*". Utilizing exploitation to gather information from external platforms about reader behaviour, or using functionality like sharing, comments and other features available on social media platforms to extend the newspapers' own publication platform, therefore requires a practice that can incorporate ad hoc and adaptive ways of working where newspaper workers quickly react and adapt to changes. Newspaper workers "dance in the dark" when trying to find out how the social media platform owners alter the conditions for how to distribute news through the social media platform. It therefore requires experimentation to find out what works, but also the ability to quickly adapt in a situation where the platform owner dictates the rules based on their own needs: "*[The social media platform] made a change to promote links, by prioritizing them in their algorithm [...] So we had to adapt to it, which was quite fast to do, and then after a while you realized why they made the change, it was because they wanted to fit the content into [their new service], simply put.*".

6 Discussion

Newspaper workers utilize different digital resources in their work. The focus of this paper is how internal digital platforms are coupled with social media platforms to extend newspapers' digital media ecosystems. We use de Certeau's conceptualization of practices as strategical and tactical based on their relation to a "place". A strategical approach requires control over the place while a tactical approach evolves when the user has subordinated another user's control over the place. The newspaper workers have strategic goals with their overall involvement in digital platforms. They try to control the users by providing them with attractive content to be able to display advertisement to them. The old business model heavily influences this strategy; the more readers that can be funnelled to the newspapers own platform, the more revenue from advertisement.

Established social media platforms may at first glance seem like open platforms with endless possibilities for new forms of interaction with end-users. However, these possibilities come with a price, as the platforms are governed by an owner with a set agenda, and the users of the platform already have an established practice that the newspapers need to manage. The empirical findings illustrate how end-users on social media platforms are used to a different tone of voice compared to the tone of voice in the traditional sender-receiver relationship found in the newspaper industry. Furthermore, the findings illustrate how the change in tone of voice presents both challenges and opportunities for the newspaper workers' everyday practice. The newspaper uses *adaptation tactics* to reframe their relationship to the readers in the context of social media by using a more casual and friendly tone, but also by changing when and how they interact with the users. Using the terminology of de Certeau, the *newspaper adapts towards the place*, as created by the social media platform owner and their base of end-users. For example, relationships between users on social media platforms are continuous and not bound by tradi-

tional hours of operation. The newspaper workers *adapt* to this by “always being open”. The change in relationship can be interpreted as an illustration of the dynamic of what Tilson et al. (2013) refer to as a change in social structure or a new pattern that appears driven by the introduction of a digital platform. The change in social structure also opens up opportunities for re-use of the place or *exploitation tactics*. The newspaper workers describe the tone of voice when interacting with users on their own digital platform as quite harsh and critical, leading to issues with having to moderate comments. Since the tone of voice on a platform such as Facebook is perceived to be friendlier, some newspaper workers see potential in switching to having discussions about articles facilitated by using the comment feature on Facebook rather than on their own platform. These exploitation tactics lead to fewer issues with hostile “trolls”, and an overall friendlier interaction with their users. The newspaper controls the readers by directing them to the social media platform for the purpose of exploiting the potential of the platform as an arena for interaction where the end users behave better. The benefit is that the newspaper, in the role of a producer of a publishing platform, creates a better experience for the readers, the drawback however, is that they relinquish control over the end-user, and also data about the end-user to the social media platform owner.

The attempt to control users can also be seen in how the newspaper workers use *tactics of exploitation* to present the readers with appealing content that is more likely to be interesting for them. If the newspaper can manage to deliver content that is highly interesting for the reader, and reach a high engagement level it can lead to a news article going viral. Viral news is highly sought after, as news going viral can lead to a burst in traffic, which can be very profitable. The *exploitation tactic* of utilizing user data from both the newspaper’s own platform as well as social media platforms increases the likelihood of identifying content that many readers can potentially find interesting enough for it to turn viral. The model below (Fig. 2) illustrates how organizations attempt to control their end users by applying strategic thinking towards their own platform, while employing tactics towards external platforms. Furthermore, the model illustrates how user preference, or content in the form of, for example newspaper articles, and user-generated content such as comments, is utilized or moved between the different platforms to support the strategic and tactical manoeuvres.

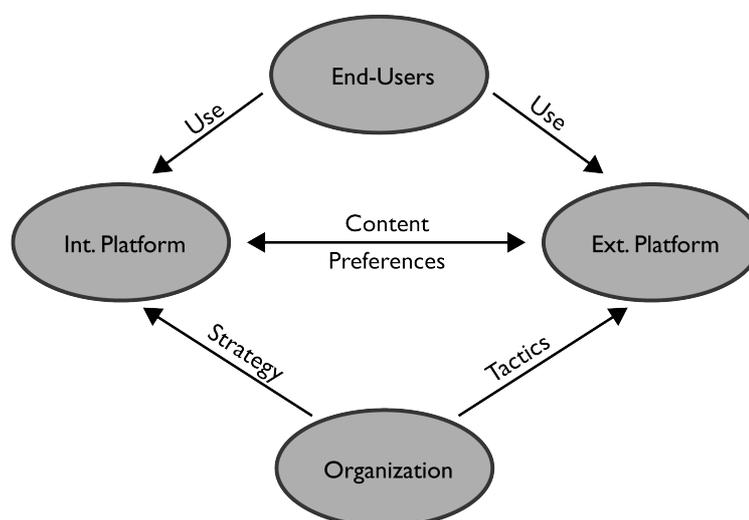


Figure 2. *Relation between strategy and tactics and the organization’s digital publishing platform and external digital platforms.*

The findings also illustrate how previously investigated strategies for involvement (Krumsvik, 2013) such as deliberation, distribution and data strategy is carried out in practice through tactics that works in concert and enforce each other. For example data that provides knowledge about what content that the users wants to discuss on a public platform helps to drive future or improved distribution. The monitoring of user data to and public opinion to drive content production also illustrates how the end-users influence over the content increase, given that newspaper workers takes decision regarding news content based on user data. These findings provide a complementary perspective on Orlikowski and Scott (2015) findings on how social media can shift power from producers to end-users. The findings imply that decisions about what resources to exploit in external platforms shouldn't be taken in isolation, instead the combination of resources should always be considered as the tactics influence or depend on each other. As an example, the cost of "outsourcing" comments to Facebook might be user data, which in turn could have been a valuable asset for a different tactical practice. This resonates well with, and illustrates in practice what de Certeau (1984) refers to as the combination of heterogeneous resources to reap benefits.

The empirical findings illustrate how the practices around adaption and exploitation tactics relies on *preparedness* and *ad hoc response* that requires newspaper workers to be ready to adapt to fast changes in the digital platform. These changes can be related to the generative nature of digital platforms leading to unanticipated changes (Yoo, 2013). The need to be prepared comes from the lack of control that the newspaper workers have by using external platforms features, such as comments on an external platform like Facebook or Twitter. The practitioners can in some scenarios rely on using support systems that help them monitor for events initiated by end-users, for example when an unexpected comment thread is revived by an end-user to drive their own agenda. These issues are very time sensitive, as an unmonitored comment thread can lead to negative consequences for the newspaper.

However, when the change is initiated by a platform owner who without warning changes how an algorithm sorts and displays the newspaper's content in the social media platform, the newspaper workers have to rely on ad hoc response in order to figure out what happened and how it can be amended as fast as possible to minimize the damage on the use of the social media platform as a distribution channel. The modus operandi reflects the practice of a bricoleur (Ciborra, 2002) in situations where the practitioners find themselves in situations where they find themselves "unready-to-hand" (Suchman, 1987). The ad hoc nature is also seen in how trial and error is used to figure out how to exploit certain features, or to find out how mechanics work that can be used in the favour of the newspaper's strategy for their own platform. Additionally, the generative nature of the social media platforms also makes it important that the newspaper workers are able to receive continuous training in order handle the exploitative and adaptive tactics required to enact the strategy.

7 Conclusion

The findings illustrate how user involvement in the social media context works in concert through a balance between tactics and strategy, where strategies for deliberation, donation, data gathering and distribution (Krumsvik, 2013) are meshed together into a dynamic process where tactical manoeuvres towards external social media platforms are balanced to support the strategy for the publishers own platform. In practice this is illustrated by how a main strategy of controlling users, to support an advertisement driven business, is enacted in practice through employing adaptation and exploitation tactics to support the strategy for the newspaper's own platform.

Furthermore, the findings illustrate how a practice revolving around ad hoc response is required to manage issues that arise due to swift changes in the generative nature of digital platforms in order to support a tactical approach.

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